



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

December 16, 2016

The Honorable Marco Rubio
United States Senate
284 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Rubio:

Thanks to your leadership and staunch support of Everglades restoration, critical South Florida projects were authorized in the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act of 2016. The legislation facilitates the investment of nearly \$2 billion during the next 10 years to restore the flow of clean water in the central portion of the Everglades system and allows for completion of the Picayune Strand project to restore 55,000 acres in Collier County. On behalf of South Florida Water Management District's Governing Board, I want to express our gratitude for your support in sustaining the continuing momentum of overall restoration efforts.

Here's what your work means to South Florida:

- The Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP) will benefit more than 1.5 million acres in the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, the Water Conservation Areas, Everglades National Park and Florida Bay. The project features in CEPP will redistribute existing treated water in a more natural sheetflow and provide about 210,000 acre-feet per year of additional clean, fresh water flowing through the central portion of the Everglades. CEPP will also reduce the number and severity of undesirable discharges from Lake Okeechobee to the coastal estuaries.
- Restoration of Picayune Strand receives the authorization for the necessary finances to complete the transformation of 55,000 acres of failed residential development back to a more natural state. Congress' action allows for the completion of the critical remaining features necessary to maintain flood control for neighboring farms and residences, protect manatees and reestablish sheetflow through the expansive wetlands. Once complete, the project will restore surface water flow vital to wetlands in the western Everglades, improve habitat for the endangered Florida panther and improve water quality in the Ten Thousands Islands National Wildlife Refuge.

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Both of these efforts are significant components of restoration. Passage of the latest water authorization bill brings them closer to completion and realization of their intended environmental benefits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan O'Keefe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being more prominent than the last name "O'Keefe".

Dan O'Keefe
Chairman, SFWMD Governing Board

DOK/gm

c: Florida Congressional Delegation